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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides information for teachers who are considering a career in a private or independent school. Descriptions are given of the functions and philosophies underlying private education. Features which distinguish independent schools in the areas of governance, finances, curriculum, and student and faculty selection are discussed. A general description is given of what independent schools can offer a prospective teacher and what these schools expect of their faculty. Suggestions are made on how to look for a job in a private school and include information on preparing a resume, interviewing for a position, and what may be expected in regard to salaries and benefits. Resources on private schools are listed under three headings: directories, general readings, and teacher placement agencies. (JD)

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National Association of Independent Schools

18 Tremont Street
Boston, Massachusetts
02108

Independent. *adj.* **1.** not subject to control by others; **2.** self-governing; **3.** not requiring or relying on others (as for care or livelihood).

— Webster's Dictionary

Additional copies of this booklet are available from Order Department, NAIS, 18 Tremont St., Boston, Mass. 02108. Single copy: free; multiple copies: prices on request.

A CAREER IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TEACHING

What are independent schools?

One segment of the "private school" world is made up of independent schools—nonprofit institutions governed by a board of trustees and supported almost entirely by private funds in the form of tuition, voluntary giving, grants, and endowment.

More specifically, an independent school

- Concentrates on the individual student and channels its resources directly to learning, counseling, and growth without diverting its energy and resources into other areas.
- Nurtures learning by students in all areas of school experience, not just in the classroom.
- Works for competence in students, not just testing for competence, in the belief that teachers' effectiveness stems, not from teacher preparation courses, but from the active engagement of each teacher in students' learning and competence.
- Sets high academic standards and expects much of its students, stressing basic skills but moving beyond them to help students develop complex reasoning skills.
- Stresses values and ethics in simple and complex situations alike, and sees to it that sympathetic adults are available for counsel and perspective on a wide variety of ethical concerns.
- Emphasizes social responsibility and strives for a multicultural and multiracial community that, through its financial aid program and in other ways, tries to build a diverse, pluralistic student body.

Most independent schools are accredited by a regional or state accrediting body and are licensed by their state department of education. All must meet state and local health and safety standards, mandatory school attendance laws, and, in certain states, still other requirements.

Unlike public schools, most independent schools are not involved in or part of large, formal systems. They do, however, share many informal contacts among themselves and with public schools. Near-

ly all independent schools that have secondary divisions offer programs to prepare students for college.

Independent schools vary greatly in purpose, organization, and size, and they serve students from varied racial, religious, economic, and

From my very first job as a teaching assistant in a public school, I discovered that teaching children was satisfying to me in many ways. I found it invigorating then, and 10 years later still do, to see my enthusiasm and interest in books and ideas communicated to my students and to enjoy children delighting in their own ideas, discoveries, and accomplishments.

The experience of teaching in an independent school has deepened and enriched the pleasures of teaching for me. At an independent school my liberal arts background is considered to be as valuable as formal teacher training. I appreciate the encouragement to develop and try new ideas and curricula. Further, I have had the flexibility to move from one kind or level of teaching to another as my interests and abilities have evolved. Finally, I appreciate the continuous exchange of ideas and opinions with colleagues. Whether we agree or disagree, this exchange serves to bring us closer as we try to deal as well as we can with all aspects of our students' lives at school.

Ann R. Cylkowski
Elementary school teacher
Dedham Country Day School
Dedham, Massachusetts

cultural backgrounds. Some are progressive and innovative, some are conservative and traditional; some are large, others small; day or boarding; single-sex or coeducational; sectarian or nonsectarian. Despite their small numbers, independent schools have been an integral part of our nation's educational resources since colonial times.

Since in most cases each school is free to determine and practice its own philosophy of education, spirit and climate vary from school to school, even though schools may appear to have similar organizational structures and educational programs. This diversity among independent schools is one of their most distinctive characteristics.

What makes independent schools different?

While all schools have students as their primary concern, they differ substantially in their interpretation of objectives and approaches. Here are some of the basic features that distinguish independent schools.

Governance

An independent school is incorporated as a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation and is governed by a board of trustees that selects its own members, determines the school's philosophy, selects the chief administrative officer, and bears ultimate responsibility for the school's resources, finances, and program. The chief administrator, who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school, may be called the president, principal, headmistress, headmaster, or simply head of school. The head's duties are somewhat comparable to those of a public school superintendent in that he or she is responsible for all aspects of the educational community.

Finances

Tuition is the primary source of support for independent schools. Additional sources of income are gifts and grants from parents, graduates, foundations, and corporations. Independent schools receive no direct public funds but do often benefit from federal assistance through the public school system, such as school lunch and library programs.

Curriculum

Each independent school designs its own curriculum. The majority of those having a secondary division offer college preparatory programs. Independent schools may provide instruction in areas not appropriate for or permitted in public schools.

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Why do I teach? I enjoy the spontaneity, the give and take between student and teacher, and the exciting fluidity of a classroom.

Why teach in an independent school? The independent schools in America must be willing—and most are—to experiment thoughtfully, to reach out, to allow risk taking and failure as well as success, yet to search and strive continually for excellence. Independent schools allow a teacher to construct a framework of activity, offer opportunities for hands-on empiricism, open mindedness, and flexibility, and encourage the curiosity and creativity that lead to learning.

What rewards lie in teaching? The little joys in teaching every day: the "Aha! I see what you mean!" from a student that can brighten the gloomiest day. Rewards range from little perks like that to a letter from a student years later describing how you changed her life for the better and how she has never forgotten the quality of learning that she shared with you.

Teachers are paid to think, mostly about things they enjoy. Teachers see kids become incredible people; teachers share and give and feel all of it right down to the core. Teaching is eminently a human activity, with rewards as intense as humanly possible.

Michael R. Hannigan
Geology teacher
Kent Denver Country Day School
Englewood, Colorado

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Student selection

Unlike its public school counterparts, an independent school may select its students—those who it believes will gain most from its educational program. Boarding schools have a special opportunity to serve students from all parts of the country as well as those from abroad. Whether boarding or day, independent schools make great efforts to serve students from widely varying racial, religious, economic, and cultural backgrounds.

Faculty

Each independent school develops its own criteria for selecting and evaluating teachers. Although certification is required in some states, a recent trend among state legislatures is to relax certification requirements. This move underscores a philosophy long held by independent schools that coursework in a particular discipline is more desirable than education courses leading to certification.

What do independent schools offer their teachers?

The personal atmosphere and sense of community in independent schools, the highly motivated students, the support of interested colleagues, administrators, and parents, greater opportunities to develop and shape courses and curriculum, and the chance to have an effect on the total development of young people are important reasons to consider teaching in an independent school.

Having teachers serve as role models, advisers, and counselors is important for all young people. The independent school experience can have a profound effect on the awareness students have of others and of themselves.

What do independent schools expect of their teachers?

Independent and public schools differ markedly in their qualifications and expectations for teachers. A college degree and sufficient credits in education courses to meet the state's certification requirements, and passing a national and/or local examination are typical criteria in most public school districts.

Within the limitations imposed by state and regional accreditation requirements, each independent school establishes its own qualifications and expectations. A small school may need people who can teach two or more subjects and work with students who have differing learning styles and abilities. A large school, on the other hand, may want people who can teach a wider range of courses in a particular subject or develop a new course or program.

In screening candidates, independent schools consider both professional preparation and personal qualities. In looking at professional preparation, they seek teachers who have above-average college records. Most independent school teachers were liberal arts majors and participated actively in their colleges and communities. Prior teaching experience and advanced degrees improve a candidate's chances, but they are not firm job requirements. The ability to teach more than one subject, to advise students, to sponsor a student activity, and sometimes to coach a sport are more important qualifications in many independent schools.

While professional credentials are important, equal weight is given to the personal qualities of prospective teachers. Because independent schools are concerned with the total development of each child, it is important for the teacher to have a genuine interest in and commitment to all aspects of children's growth.

Most independent schools provide for ample communication among teachers, students, and parents. Perhaps the most important motivation for a student is the teacher's interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Thus the teacher's values are important factors in any hiring decision.

The independent school teacher often advises a special group of students on academic, social, or personal development. In a boarding school, the teacher's advisees may live in a dormitory with the teacher, thus offering additional opportunities for working with students. As adviser, teacher, activity sponsor, and coach, the independent school teacher has many opportunities for developing better understanding of students' interests, needs, and abilities. During the interview, the school will be looking for signs that the candidate is willing to assume these varied and important roles.

John C. Esty, Jr., president of NAIS, has this to say about teaching in independent schools: "The teacher is the basic unit; the basic interaction is between teacher and student. Independent schools believe that significant teaching and learning happen all the time—on playing fields, in activities, in the dormitories of residential schools, in a quiet stroll with a teacher. We believe that teaching and learning are not bound by time clocks or classroom space. Most teachers rank good relationships with students as the most important element in their job satisfaction."

Here, in outline form, are the qualifications and qualities independent schools seek in candidates for teaching positions.

A. Professional criteria
   1. Bachelor's degree; priority given to those holding advanced degrees

A little over a year ago i left college knowing I wanted to be a teacher and believing that this meant, eventually, teaching in public schools. I thought all private schools were training grounds for elitism, exclusive havens for pampered rich kids.

The myth was dispelled for me by my year at Hyde School, an independent boarding secondary school. Hyde's impressive financial aid policy gives it a very diverse student body, and with its commitment to character education the students are anything but pampered.

But the most important factor in my decision to continue teaching at an independent school is the opportunity I've had to learn to be the best teacher I can be. From the first interview, I was never asked whether I could "fit in" to the program, but what impact I could have on it. I've been granted great freedom, and with it greater responsibilities. The pressures come not from bureaucratic regulations but from students demanding excellence in teaching as well as from themselves.

Nina Torres-Jones
English teacher
The Hyde School
Bath, Maine

2. Prior teaching experience (helpful, but not required)
3. Ability to teach at various levels within one subject area
4. Ability to work with students of differing abilities
5. Enthusiasm for one's academic discipline

B. Personal qualities
1. Genuine interest in working with young people
2. Good communication skills, both oral and written
3. Curiosity and the desire to improve skills and grow professionally
4. Commitment to teaching at the precollege level
5. Interest in working with students on special projects, advising student activities, and assisting in extracurricular activities (coaching a sport, assisting with a dramatic production)

How do I begin to look for a job?

In offering the following suggestions about how to conduct a successful job search, it must be emphasized that there is no one way to go about it. The following information indicates a general pattern of practical steps.

Preparing a resume

Resumes vary in style, but a good resume should include most of the following items: a short statement of career objectives, full educational history, complete employment history in chronological order, professional and community affiliations, social activities, honors, publications, basic personal information, and a list of references. Before listing people as references, you should ask them if they are willing to speak in your behalf and keep them up to date on your plans. Be sure that your resume lists their current addresses and telephone numbers.

Guidance on preparing a resume is available in a number of commercially published handbooks and in the placement offices of colleges and universities. Clarity and brevity are essential.

Gathering information on independent schools

An important first step is to make a list of preferences: type of school (boys', girls', coeducational); location (part of the country; urban, suburban, rural); philosophy (traditional, progressive); and grade levels (elementary; elementary-secondary; secondary).

Consult the directories of independent schools listed below in the "Resources" section. Most of these are available at the reference desk

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My experience at Asheville is a good example of the opportunities for growth and experience that exist in independent boarding schools. Since joining the faculty two years ago, I have been involved in many areas of administration—admission, publications, student activities, dormitory supervision—as well as coaching, leading study projects, and serving as an adviser.

I have always found an open ear for new ideas. For instance, I arranged a tour of southern England for our junior varsity soccer team last spring. Our English hosts are returning the visit this year. What a great experience! If one is willing to work, the school can usually provide these kinds of opportunities.

Chuck Flournoy
Assistant director of admission
Asheville School
Asheville, North Carolina

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in your public or college library. Using your preferences as a guide, develop a list of the schools that meet your criteria.

Talk to friends who have attended an independent school and to neighbors and family members who are or have been associated with independent schools. Ask them to provide an introduction to their school.

A very important part of your job search is a conversation with your college or university placement office. Many college career planning officers have contacts in independent schools as well as copies of school profiles and catalogues.

Carefully investigate the services of a teacher placement agency. Many independent schools use professional placement agencies. Those most often used by independent schools are named below, under "Resources."

Consider teaching in a summer program at an independent school. If you are interested in boarding schools, or are new to independent education, a summer experience can be a valuable introduction to life at an independent school. This is particularly important for anyone who may have dormitory responsibilities.

Investigate internship programs for novice teachers. These programs often offer a wealth of experience and can help you decide whether to make teaching a lifelong commitment. Each year, NAIS publishes a list of member schools that have internship programs. See "Resources," below, for further information.

Getting in touch with schools

Write to the heads of schools on your list to tell them of your interest in their school. In such letters, which should be typed individually, briefly state what type of position you are seeking and why their particular school interests you. Enclose your resume, which may be printed or duplicated, and ask for an opportunity to visit the school and be interviewed.

Preparing for the interview

Before your interview, find out as much as you can about the school from directories, the school's catalogue, and materials the school sends to prospective students. Pay special attention to the school's philosophy, founders, special programs, and facilities. Consider how these match your concerns and what special skills you might bring to the school.

Be prepared to discuss your teaching style, your academic and social expectations for students, and your reasons for wanting to teach in an independent school.

The interview

The interview presents an opportunity for both parties to ask questions and establish rapport. Be prepared. Make a list of questions. It is better to pursue anything that is not clear at this point than to lose out on an opportunity because of a misunderstanding.

The amount of time required for an interview varies from school to school. Some schools expect candidates to spend a full day on campus to meet various administrators and teachers and perhaps to visit classes.

At the end of the interview, be sure you understand the next steps and who is responsible for following up. Are you, for example, expected to provide more information? Is the school going to get in touch with you? How soon may you expect to hear from the school?

Writing a follow-up note after the interview not only is the right thing to do but also gives you another opportunity to ask questions and to summarize your understanding of next steps.

Schools do not extend an invitation to come for an interview to every candidate, and it is therefore unrealistic to assume you will be invited by every school to which you apply. If after three to four weeks you have not received acknowledgment of your interest from the school, you should send a polite inquiry. Remember, schools are busy teaching from August through June, and during that time almost all of their energies and resources are devoted to that end.

A professional approach to your job search is important. The appearance and content of your letters and resume may determine whether you are invited to the school for an interview. They should be neat, accurate, and concise. You should return calls promptly and acknowledge letters as soon as possible. If you have to change an appointment, you should notify the school immediately.

If your address and telephone number change in the course of your job search, it is extremely important for you to let prospective schools know this so that they may reach you with difficulty or delay.

Salaries and benefits

It is difficult to provide detailed information on salaries because each school determines its own salary range. Historically, salary questions have been the private concern of the school and the individual teacher, but more and more schools are publishing salary information in their faculty handbooks. A prospective teacher should be aware that independent school salaries are, as a rule, lower than those in the neighboring public schools. If one takes the school's total benefits package into account, however, the difference may be significantly

reduced, especially in a boarding school, which often provides room and board as a condition of employment.

Each school bases decisions about its salaries and benefits on its resources. Benefit programs vary considerably, but nearly all schools offer health and retirement plans. The most common health plan is Blue Cross/Blue Shield. The Teachers' Insurance and Annuity Association (TIAA) and its companion plan, the College Retirement Equities Fund (CREF), are the most common disability and retirement plans offered through schools.

Boarding schools, and a few day schools, offer housing in dormitories or other school-owned property rent-free or at a substantial reduction. Meals for teachers and their families in the school's dining hall can be a major benefit. Many schools offer tuition remission to children of faculty members as well as direct grants to faculty children. Many schools also provide grants to teachers for graduate study, participation in professional organizations, and special projects.

Beginning teachers' contracts are for one year. Although independent schools have no formal tenure system, some schools give multiple-year contracts once a teacher has successfully completed a preliminary period at the school. The school's faculty handbook should provide details on the school's salary and benefits program as well as teacher evaluation.

Special employment service for minority teachers

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), a voluntary membership organization of some 1,000 elementary and secondary independent schools in the United States and abroad; A Better Chance, Inc. (ABC), a special program that recruits minority students from economically disadvantaged situations for independent schools and a group of select public schools; and Independent Educational Services (IES), a nonprofit national placement service for teachers and administrators, cosponsor a special recruitment and placement service for minority teachers.

Representatives from NAIS, ABC, and IES are available to meet with interested candidates. Those who wish placement assistance may complete the two-page Minority Search Application, which is available from NAIS, ABC, and IES. This application, together with a current resume and list of references, form the placement dossier that IES, which serves as the clearinghouse for dossiers, uses in working to match candidates and interested schools. No fee is charged for this service.

To get in touch with NAIS, write to 18 Tremont St., Boston, Mass.

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One reason I'm quick to support a career in independent school teaching is that it can explode the myth that the ideals and enthusiasms generated in college must be suspended when entering the "real world" of work. In college I realized my own ideal career would somehow need to employ my chief enthusiasms—responsible thought, nature, athletics—in a way that would help the community around me. My present job indulges me in a balance of just those activities: I teach English and philosophy, coach girls' basketball, and tag along on various school backpacking trips. That's a handful to squeeze into one semester, but with students as bright and funny as ours, it's hard to resist the extra "duties."

I've found that, given the right school, you have a high degree of choice in determining just how you contribute as a teacher. I'm intellectually and geographically restless, so the freedom that has marked my teaching experience—I've designed my own courses and lived in Vermont, New Mexico, and California—is another unexpected but delightful advantage to independent schools. But the bottom line remains the students we teach, and the rewards of working with kids so stimulating and varied.

Fred Hoerner
English teacher
University High School
San Francisco, California

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For me, the defining spirit of an independent school is its commitment to quality. Those who populate independent school campuses pursue a common goal: excellence in academic and personal achievement. I have found, after teaching at public and parochial schools, that the sense of a unified purpose in the more open atmosphere of an independent school provides the foundation for an educator's greatest challenges and greatest rewards. Resolution of everyday school problems—"Why isn't Johnny doing his homework?" "Why isn't Jenny writing better?"—is always sought within a specific and personal context, which is itself the beginning of the remedy. Schoolwide concerns are worked out in individual terms in a setting that is refreshingly free of trendy educational or political rhetoric.

At their best, independent schools foster growth in teachers and administrators as well as in students. Thus the prevailing climate for students and teachers alike is one of opportunity and continuous expansion of academic and personal horizons. This is what makes working at an independent school worthwhile.

Jerry Zank
Upper school head
The Elgin Academy
Elgin, Illinois

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02108, or call (617) 723-6900 or, toll-free, 1-800-343-9138. To reach ABC, write to 739 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116, or call (617) 536-5270. IES is at 80 Nassau St., Princeton, N.J. 08540, telephone (609) 921-6195 or, toll-free, 1-800-257-5102.

Resources

Resources are listed under three headings: Directories, General Readings, and Teacher Placement Agencies.

Directories

Boarding Schools. Published annually by the Committee on Boarding Schools, a joint activity of the National Association of Independent Schools and the Secondary School Admission Test Board. Provides information on over 200 boarding schools and their summer programs. Available from Boarding Schools, 18 Tremont St., Boston, Mass. 02108; (617) 723-6900. Free.

The Educational Register. Published annually. Contains articles by independent school people on current educational issues and information on independent schools and colleges and summer programs. Available from Vincent-Curtis, 224 Clarendon St., Boston, Mass. 02116; (617) 536-0100. Free.

The Handbook of Private Schools. Published annually. Provides an extensive listing of private schools in the United States. In addition to giving brief histories and descriptions of school life and profiles arranged by state, it also contains information on the head of the school, grade level, faculty, number of students, previous year's graduates, tuition, special programs, facilities, endowment, founding date, affiliation (if any), and memberships in educational organizations. This is a standard reference book available at many public libraries, or it can be ordered from Porter Sargent Publishers, Inc., 11 Beacon St., Boston, Mass. 02108; (617) 523-1670.

Independent Secondary Schools: A Handbook. Published every three years by the Secondary School Admission Test Board, which sponsors the Secondary School Admission Test (SSAT). Detailed information is presented on those member schools of SSATB that wish to participate. Available from SSATB, c/o Educational Testing Service, Box 922, Princeton, N.J. 08541.

NAIS Internship Programs. Published annually. This list briefly describes schools and their internship programs and financial arrangements. Available from Order Department, NAIS, 18 Tremont St., Boston, Mass. 02108.

NAIS Publications. Published twice a year. Current descriptive

order-form listing of periodicals, books, and reports published by the National Association of Independent Schools. Available from Order Department, NAIS, 18 Tremont St., Boston, Mass. 02108. Free.

Peterson's Annual Guide to Independent Secondary Schools. Published annually. The guide, prepared for those wishing to learn more about independent secondary schools in the United States and Canada as well as similar schools abroad that use English as the classroom language, presents information in several formats to help readers compare schools. Available from Peterson's Guides, P.O. Box 2123, Princeton, N.J. 08540.

Private Independent Schools. Published annually. Divided into three major sections describing participating schools, summer programs, and educational associations. Available from Bunting & Lyon, Inc., Wallingford, Conn. 06492; (203) 269-3333.

General readings

The following books and articles giving information on independent schools reflect differing points of view that may prove helpful.

Baird, Leonard L. *The Elite Schools: A Profile of Prestigious Independent Schools.* Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1977. An informative, fascinating report on a group of selected eastern independent secondary schools.

Barrett, Joan, and Sally F. Goldfarb. *The Insider's Guide to Prep Schools.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979. A youthful, slightly irreverent look at independent boarding schools whose candor provides a refreshing and different view of independent schools.

Boegehold, Betty D. *Education before Five: A Handbook on Preschool Education.* New York: Teachers College, 1978. An excellent resource on the major theories of educating young children, with many of the programs mentioned coming from independent schools.

Esty, John C., Jr. *Choosing a Private School.* New York: Dodd, Mead, 1974. Practical suggestions for examining various types of private schools, with an excellent, if somewhat dated, resource list, directory of independent school organizations and agencies, and bibliography.

Independent School. Quarterly magazine of the National Association of Independent Schools, 18 Tremont St., Boston, Mass. 02108. The best overview of issues and concerns of independent schools, with a special center section, the NAIS Reporter, that provides news of NAIS, member school programs and activities, and other publications and programs of interest to those in independent schools. The classified advertising section lists openings in schools as well as advertisements from persons seeking positions stating their qualifications.

Johnson, Eric W. *Teaching School: Points Picked Up.* Boston: NAIS, 1979. The author blends theory and practice for "anyone who is in teaching, wants to teach, or knows a teacher" in writing about instruction, discussion, planning, study skills and homework, getting organized, testing and evaluation, reports, and seeing oneself in the context of the entire school.

Kraushaar, Otto F. *American Nonpublic Schools: Patterns of Diversity.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972. Still the definitive study of nonpublic schools, containing much supporting data; heavy reading and thus most appropriate for those doing research on private schools.

Kraushaar, Otto F. *From Puritans to the Present.* Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Fastback No. 78, 1976. A shorter version of Kraushaar's mammoth study, listed above, covering many of the major trends and historical points of nonpublic education.

Teacher placement agencies

The following are teacher placement agencies most often used by independent schools.

Educational Resources Group; Gordon Day, Director; Box 211, Solebury, Pa. 18963; (215) 297-8279. Teacher and administrative placement. No fees to candidates.

Independent Educational Services; William W. Baeckler, Executive Director; 80 Nassau Street, Princeton, N.J. 08540; (609) 921-6195 or toll-free 1-800-257-5102. Nonprofit teacher and administrative placement, school head searches. In conjunction with NAIS and ABC, IES offers a no-cost registration and placement service for minority candidates in independent schools across the country; see "Special employment service for minority teachers," immediately preceding this section.

Robert M. Sandoe & Associates; Robert Sandoe, Chairman; 29 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. 02116; (617) 262-5380. Teacher and administrative placement, school head searches.

School Service Bureau; Paul Buckingham, Director; 649 W. Boylston St., Worcester, Mass. 01606; (617) 757-9225. Teacher and administrative placement.